



Rhode Island State Council of Churches and the Rhode Island Bible Society

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Executive Minister

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February 29, 2024

The Honorable Evan Shanley
Chair, House Committee on State Government and Elections
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H-7386

Dear Chairman Shanley and Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections:

I am writing today in support of H-7386. The Rhode Island State Council of Churches recognizes the important role that libraries play in providing access to and promoting literacy, as well as their essential role in the support and development of our democratic norms.

Rhode Island, since its founding, has a long tradition of maintaining appropriate boundaries between the rights and responsibilities of the civil state and religious belief/practice. Roger Williams was keenly aware of the danger of the imposition of religious views through the apparatus of the civil state.

While religious communities are free to practice their beliefs as they see fit, and are free to advocate for their values in the context of our political process, they are not free to dictate how or what others should think.

H-7386 provides a helpful bulwark against any attempt to restrict access to knowledge or information, even if it offends a particular religious conscious. Religious freedoms are strengthened, not weakened, by a robust civic polity.

The Rhode Island State Council of Churches urges passage of H-7386. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Langill
Executive Minister